

Alicia Walf

Senior Lecturer, Cognitive Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Troy, NY, US

Neuroscientist with extensive research into body, brain, and mind relationships related to brain health, social cognition and emotions.

Biography

Alicia Walf's research interests are fueled by the broad question: Why are there individual differences in stress? This question led her to studying hormones' actions for plasticity in the brain and body across the lifespan. Notably, she found that mechanisms of estradiol in the limbic system for behavioral responses to stress occur through a novel estrogen receptor to promote plasticity, without increasing growth in cancer-prone tissues of the body. She has since refined her pursuit to include further consideration of body, brain, and mind relationships as they relate to memory, perception, social cognition, and emotions. She has found that as much as hormones influence the brain for behavioral outcomes, behavior itself alters the brain, which is key for lasting brain health. An ongoing focus is to understand the contextual variables important for these effects of hormones for behavioral and cognitive processes. Dr. Walf has taken a cross-species and cross-discipline approach. Similarities across species for stress and hormone effects are important to note as they suggest common mechanisms across mammals, including humans, in the brain and body responses to challenges. Her studies of stress effects and mechanisms are not only confined to the laboratory, but often occur in the wild. Some examples of studying individual's behavioral and cognitive responses to stress in their natural habitats include architectural built environments, artistic installations, interactions with technology, conference rooms, and the classroom. Her findings about stress for emotional and other cognitive processes drive the varied and creative approaches Dr. Walf brings to the classroom. She incorporates approaches, such as contemplative pedagogy, intergroup dialogue, active and remote learning, with the goal to promote well-being, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Areas of Expertise

Brain Health, Emotion, Memory, Neuroplasticity, Well-Being, Hormones' Behavioral Effects, Stress, Neuroscience, Anxiety

Education

University at Albany, NY

Ph.D. Behavioral Neuroscience

University at Albany, NY

B.A. Psychology

University at Albany, NY

B.A. East Asian Studies

[Please click here to view the full profile.](#)

This profile was created by [Expertfile.](#)